



Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association

2011 September 9

Dear VESTA AE Colleagues,

Welcome back – and for those new to us, welcome! As your new president, I look forward to working with you this coming year. We continue to press for better working conditions and systemic improvements, knowing that when teachers are well supported in their work, our students, schools, and system all benefit.

We are currently bargaining with the VBE. Our team will resume at the table, and bargaining updates will be forthcoming to keep you abreast of the latest developments. Provincially, the BCTF has also been bargaining, and teachers around the province are beginning job action – refusal of administrative duties – in order to press for their contractual needs. We continue to maintain our own local contract, and so are not party to this, but we will, as always, stand in solidarity with our teaching colleagues. What occurs at the provincial bargaining table has ramifications for us, so we need to stay supportive and informed.

Recent audits have put our learning centres under the spotlight, showing the need to ensure that the VBE understands our different programs and the linkages between them, particularly in light of recent staffing changes at the board. We know these programs are crucial in providing support for our students; it is essential that the VBE does too! In our classrooms, we continue to grapple with upward pressure on class size minimums and resource challenges; teachers are being asked to take on more with less, bringing challenges to teacher health and student success alike. Strong advocacy and community engagement have proven effective in mitigating these challenges, and with a municipal election upcoming, we should have many opportunities for such work.

I strongly encourage you to become active within the union this year; we will meet with more success the more of our members' talents and efforts we are able to bring to bear. Every centre needs to have a pro-d rep, staff committee chairperson, health and safety rep, and staff rep, and if any of these positions are unfilled at your worksite, I hope you will put your name forward. We will be looking for people to serve on Joint Salary Review and Educational Leave committees with the VBE, as well as our own Working and Learning Conditions committee; the VESTA committees – sustainability, anti-poverty, LGBTQ and many more – will also be seeking members and can be a tremendously rewarding way to get involved.

As your president, I will be available regularly in the VESTA office on Fridays from 9am–4pm (604-876-8376) and otherwise can be reached at sasha@vesta.ca. I am proud to be serving you this year – even if it means trying to fill some big shoes! I look forward to working with you to continue to make our system stronger while ensuring teachers get the support they both need and deserve.

In solidarity,

Sasha Wiley-Shaw
VESTA Adult Education Sub-local President

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